DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 078 805 HE 004 447

AUTHOR	Chickering, Arthur W.
TITLE	Policies and Procedures for Granting Advanced Standing.
INSTITUTION	State Univ. of New York, Saratoga Springs. Empire State Coll.
PUB DATE	14 May 73
NOTE	15p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Achievement; Academic Performance; *Advanced Placement; *Advanced Placement Programs; *Advanced Students; College Students; *Higher Education; School Policy
IDENTIFIERS	*Empire State College

ABSTRACT

The policies and procedures for granting advanced standing at Empire State College are based on three requirements. First, the learnings for which recognition is requested must be articulated. Second, the learnings must be pertinent to the student's goals and consistent with the educational goals of the college. Third, evidence must be generated in support of the learnings claimed. Two basic steps by which advanced standing is granted include portfolio preparation and application by the student and evaluation by the college. The portfolio is organized in three sections: an initial summary, a general essay, and an appendix of supporting evidence. Time requirements and records, including the transcript statement and portfolio, are reviewed. (MJM)

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EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
SARATOGA SPRINGS
NEW YORK 12866

ED 078805

To: Empire State College Faculty

May 14, 1973

From: Arthur W. Chickering

Subject: Policies and Procedures for Granting Advanced Standing

On March 7 and 8 a Task Force of Associate Deans and faculty representatives considered several documents and numerous basic issues concerning the matter of granting advanced standing on the basis of prior learnings. The Task Force members were:

Albany Learning Center

Mike Plumer
Carolyn Forrey

Metropolitan New York Learning Center

Nancy Tapper
Kathryn Yatrakis

Genesee Valley Learning Center

William Laidlaw
Myrna Miller

Long Island Learning Center

Forest Davis
Catherine Kadragic

Saratoga Coordinating Center

Virginia Lester

They were joined by Al Klevan, John Hall, and myself.

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The attached document reflects their best judgments at this time concerning policies and procedures that should be adopted by the College. Because we need to take the step ahead that this document permits I am distributing it now to become effective June 1, 1973. It should be employed for all students enrolled after that date. It can also be implemented for students already enrolled when it does not create serious problems for them.

Obviously, we still have much progress to make in this complex area and I am sure these policies and procedures will undergo significant development and modification during the coming academic year. The Academic and Learning Programs and Related Research Committee (The ALP Committee) established by our recent By-Laws will be the vehicle for such changes and as soon as it gets underway suggestions for modification should be forwarded to its chairman.

In the meantime I would be happy to receive any reactions or recommendations you wish to offer for transmission to the Committee as it develops its agenda.

These policies and procedures are basically consistent with those which characterized the earlier version. There is one significant difference, however, that needs to be highlighted. The maximum advanced standing granted toward an Associate degree has been changed from 15 months to 12 months. This means that the minimum time period for an Associate or a Bachelor's degree is six months. (See page 7) This action was taken because the three month minimum for the Associate degree simply did not allow the student sufficient time to become acquainted with the College, prepare his portfolio, and also undertake sufficient study to provide faculty members with a sound basis for recommendations.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the numerous persons who contributed their own thoughts to the Task Force deliberations and I want especially to thank the Task Force for what seemed to me to be a very productive meeting which generated a sound document that takes us a step ahead in this complex task.

EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE

Policies and Procedures for Granting Advanced Standing

Effective June 1, 1973

Advanced standing based on prior learning rests on three requirements. First, the learnings for which recognition is requested must be articulated. Second, the learnings must be pertinent to the student's goals and consistent with the educational goals of the College. Third, evidence must be generated in support of the learnings claimed. If the outcomes of particular past experiences are so ineffable that they cannot be communicated to others then they cannot be evaluated nor can their pertinence to the goals of the student and College be determined. If the learning is not pertinent to a student's goals and the College objectives then there is no adequate framework for evaluation. If evidence in support of learning cannot be generated then there is no basis for judgment concerning its presence or absence.

There are two basic steps by which advanced standing is granted: portfolio preparation and application by the student, and evaluation by the College.

Portfolio Preparation and Application

Not everything learned in the past will be appropriate for submission and evaluation. For this reason the first task in portfolio preparation is identification of the learnings for which recognition is requested and clarification of their relationship to the goals of the student and the College.

Few persons have thought about themselves, their past experiences, and their educational objectives in the ways required for portfolio preparation. Therefore these processes should begin as early as possible. The admission application provides a starting point. Pre-admission conferences and group meetings should contribute. Orientation Workshops should provide explicit opportunities for additional clarification.

Part of the problem is that many persons do not express themselves easily in writing and many others do not find it easy to talk about their plans and aspirations or their strengths and weaknesses. Thus the task of identifying what they have learned and of clarifying their educational objectives is often frightening and discouraging. But it also can be one of the most valuable educational experiences a student can have. It not only presents an opportunity to work on competence in oral and written communication but also it can be a major occasion for increased self-understanding and clarification of purposes.

After the particular learnings to be evaluated have been identified the problem of evidence must be addressed. Transcripts, certificates, licenses, examination scores, and other documents which support the learnings claimed must be assembled. Past products may need to be put into a form appropriate for submission. Tests, demonstrations, and other performance alternatives may need to be considered, and persons who can render sound judgements about special areas of competence and knowledge may need to be identified. The basic responsibility for preparing the portfolio rests with the student, but many persons will require assistance, and if it is given early in the process of portfolio preparation, evaluation by the College will proceed more

expeditiously. Therefore students should be encouraged to seek the assistance of learning center faculty members and administrators, as well as adjunct faculty members, tutors, and community resource persons with appropriate competence and knowledge.

Lengthy written documents are not necessarily the best way to start the process of portfolio preparation. Written instructions and suggestions, sample portfolios, individual conferences with mentors or others, group meetings with other students, tape recordings, all can help a student understand the process and clarify his own thinking before sitting down to write.

The Portfolio

The portfolio is organized in three sections: an initial summary, a general essay, and an appendix of supporting evidence.

The Initial Summary clearly and concisely states the total amount of advanced standing which the student seeks as well as a breakdown of the months proposed for each major area of competence or learning.

The General Essay describes the student's long range plans and specific educational objectives. It describes the past experiences and the kinds of learnings for which he seeks recognition and indicates how these past learnings are related to his educational plans or his career goals. When a student is seeking a substantial amount of advanced standing this General Essay also includes a brief description of his Program of Study and the estimated time required for its completion. By considering the relationship between his Program of Study and his prior learnings the student arrives at an estimate of where he stands in relation to the degree he seeks.

The Appendix of Supporting Evidence with an annotated Table of Contents contains the documents, transcripts, letters, certificates, and other materials which the student submits to illustrate and to document his prior learnings. These materials are integrally related to the student's General Essay and should be mentioned in the Essay by means of footnotes.

The Process

When the portfolio is completed it is submitted to the Associate Dean or his designee. It is reviewed for clarity of presentation, completeness of documentation and to ascertain the general reasonableness of the advanced standing proposed. When the portfolio is judged complete and reasonable it is submitted to the Learning Center Evaluation Committee, a date is set for its consideration, and the student is notified. If the portfolio is judged incomplete or the request unreasonable the Associate Dean shares his reservations with the student and the student may resubmit the portfolio either unrevised or with appropriate additions or changes. The Learning Center Committee may request further clarification or additional evidence before rendering a decision and may establish a new date when that is called for by these additional activities.

When the Learning Center Committee has made its determination, the Associate Dean or his designee prepares a transcript statement and gives a copy to the Dean and to the student. This transcript statement, together with the Initial Summary, the General Essay, and the Table of Contents from the Appendix of Supporting Evidence are sent to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. If additional documentation from the portfolio is requested by the Vice President, the learning center will provide it.

If neither the Dean, nor the student, nor the Vice President for Academic Affairs disagree within 30 days, the recommendation of the Learning Center Evaluation Committee stands as a decision and is transmitted in writing to the Records Office. Where there is a special need for faster action, the Associate Dean will so notify the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

If either the Dean, the student, or the Vice President question the recommendation, they can ask that the decision be reviewed by a College-wide faculty review body. This decision can be appealed to the President whose decision is final.

Evaluation

A student cannot identify pertinent learnings and clarify their relationship to his goals and the College objectives, nor can he marshall coherent supporting evidence without engaging in substantial evaluation. The faculty members, administrators, and other resource persons who help in this preparation contribute to that process. That contribution is not only necessary but desirable, for it is a vehicle for significant teaching which helps the student toward more solid perspective and more realistic plans for study. Submission of the portfolio to the Learning Center Committee simply moves the evaluation process to a framework where more systematic assessment activities and evaluative judgements can be undertaken.

The Learning Center Evaluation Committee includes three mentors, each of whom serves for a minimum of 90 days on staggered terms. The mentor with the longest period of service acts as chairman during the final period of his tenure. The Associate Dean or his designee is a permanent member of the

Committee. He acts as a resource person for the Committee and as an active member when a mentor member is absent or is forced to abstain because of special involvement with a student under consideration. The Associate Dean also helps maintain consistency of judgement and decision making within the Committee and informs the Committee of precedents, models, and developing rules of thumb which help in decision making. He also provides technical information and interprets College policy. In addition he serves the Committee by attending to the administrative details of scheduling, portfolio circulation, and communication with the Office of Student Assessment and the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

In some cases Committee members themselves will be competent to render judgement concerning major elements of a student's portfolio. Frequently, however, the Committee will find it necessary to ask others for assistance. Often other mentors and administrators at the learning center will have the necessary background or knowledge. In addition, they have the advantage of knowing the student, and of experience with assessment and with the College program. Because they are readily accessible there will be a continuing temptation to ask these persons to extend themselves beyond their range of competence. In order to avoid this temptation it often will be necessary to go beyond the immediate staff of the center and to employ outside consultants. This practice should be followed generously. It can be employed profitably even when faculty members have necessary competence because many complex judgements are more soundly made when two or more persons contribute to the decision. It is likely that when a variety of learnings are presented several different evaluators will be required for sound assessment. As a general principle, as many evaluators should be

employed as are necessary to assure expert review and sound decisions, and at this early stage in our experience, errors on the side of redundancy are better than those on the side of parsimony.

A student's purposes and the College objectives provide the frameworks for evaluation. It is essential that the person seeking advanced standing make clear his goals, his educational plans, and his status with regard to them. He must make publicly accessible what he wants to achieve, how he plans to carry out that achievement, and where he judges himself to stand in relation to it. Only then can his status be soundly determined.

A beginning student who is requesting six months or less toward a two year degree, or eighteen months or less toward a four year degree may wish to formulate his educational plans in quite general terms and is free to do so. A student who is requesting seven months or more toward a two year degree, or nineteen months or more toward a four year degree, must include an approved Program of Study as part of his application. The advanced standing granted must provide sufficient time for satisfactory completion of the Program of Study and in no case shall the advanced standing exceed twelve months for an Associate or thirty months for a Bachelor's degree.

Each student has the right to appear before the Learning Center Evaluation Committee and the Committee has the right to require the student's appearance. There is no requirement that either the student or the Committee exercise that right when it is not deemed necessary.

Some students may wish to change their Program of Study after advanced standing has been granted. In most cases, where program changes are relatively minor, no re-evaluation of prior learnings will be required. Major changes in a Program of Study, however, may require such re-evaluation and that can be ordered at the request of the Learning Center Program Review Committee.

Committee decisions will increasingly be guided by College-wide conventions, precedents, and rules of thumb. It will be the principal responsibility of the Office of Student Assessment to clarify and develop such guidelines. Each learning center should call attention to areas of special need and should recommend guidelines that appear sound on the basis of its own experience. Appendix A lists a series of conventions to be employed henceforward by each Learning Center Evaluation Committee. Additional items will be added as experience permits.

Time Requirements for Application

A student who expects little or no advanced standing signs an enrollment agreement and proceeds directly from Orientation to contract planning and implementation. He can delay application for advanced standing for as long as six months and take as much of that time as is necessary to prepare a portfolio for submission.

A student requesting more than twenty seven months for a Bachelor's degree, or more than nine months toward an Associate degree should apply within three months of his enrollment date.

Records

When a student has been granted advanced standing two kinds of records are maintained. The Transcript Statement is kept on file by the Director of Records at the Coordinating Center and a copy is retained in the learning center file. The portfolio is kept on file at the learning center. Portfolio items of special value to a student may be withdrawn by him and kept safe in some other location but each student who withdraws part of this record should be advised of its importance and urged to keep it accessible in case of need. A notation indicating the nature of the materials withdrawn should be added to the learning center's file.

The transcript statement lists the major experiences and the major learnings associated with them which were evaluated and on which the advanced standing rests. The experiences may include courses, credits, certificates and the like awarded by various institutions and organizations. They may also include work experiences, volunteer activities, various kinds of community participation, travel, independent studies, and other pursuits for which learning has been claimed and assessed.

The transcript also describes the major learnings which were assessed or documented for each of the major areas of experience. It concludes with a brief general summary which indicates the total amount of advanced standing granted and the basic rationale for the decision. Although it is expected that the Learning Center Evaluation Committee may arrive at this general judgement by estimating the amount of advanced standing appropriate for each major area of learning, the transcript statement will not report this level of detail. When program approval has been necessary as part of the decision concerning advanced standing, the transcript also

briefly summarizes the approved program so that the content for the standing granted is made clear.

While it is generally desirable that transcript records be as succinct as possible, thorough representation of a student's experiences and learnings should not be sacrificed for the sake of brevity. Many students who receive substantial advanced standing have been granted that standing in recognition of wide-ranging experiences which have involved significant responsibilities and which are supported by evidence of broad competence and high levels of personal performance and development. It is important that transcript records accurately reflect the talents and experiences of these persons. A copy of the form to be used for transcript purposes is attached.

Empire State College Saratoga Springs, N.Y. 12866

Transcript Statement for Advanced Standing

Student _____ SS# _____ Date _____

Brief Summary of:

Number of credits:

Experience:

Followed by:

Major areas of competence, grouping academic and life experience as appropriate. References to documentation.

Program of Study Summary:

Decision of Assessment Committee:

Committee Signatures _____ _____ _____

_____ Associate Dean _____

Policies and Procedures for Granting Advanced Standing

Appendix A

1. Credit for college-level work at recognized institutions of higher education is generally accepted. Such credits are viewed in relation to the student's current goals or program of study. Poor grades will be evaluated in the context of the student's total portfolio. When learnings supported by academic credits are supported by other experiences, the amount of advanced standing granted does not increase.
2. Associate degrees (i.e., A.A., A.S., A.A.S., or A.O.A.) are awarded 18 months' credit; credits from community colleges beyond offering institution degree requirements are treated as other college credits, within the general constraints recognized above.
3. Registered Nurse (R.N.) certification is considered equivalent to an A.A.S. - R.N. and is awarded a minimum of 18 months' credit. Licensed Practical Nurse (L.P.N.) certification is awarded 9 months' credit when consistent with the student's current goals.
4. Non-college formal post-secondary training (e.g. business institutes, technical schools, etc.) may be accepted if validated by work experience and if relevant to the student's educational goals.
5. Military training and experience are credited as recommended by the American Council on Education.
6. Achievement test (e.g. Advanced Placement, CLEP, N.Y.S. Proficiency, and USAFI) results are accepted. Nine months is the maximum award for College Level Examination Program tests and for the United States Armed Forces Institute's tests. Advanced placement and N.Y.S. Proficiency Examinations are evaluated on a test-by-test basis, according to test manual recommendations.

7. College Level Examination Program credit may be either at the first or second year level, depending upon the norms used. American Council on Education recommendations are followed.
8. Where credit is awarded for college course work, duplicating achievement test performance is not awarded additional credit.
9. Four months' credit is allowed for one year of full-time formal public or parochial school teaching. Additional years of experience receive credit when an increase in level and scope of skill and responsibility can be demonstrated. Nursing and business/government management experience are considered in a manner similar to teaching.
10. Artistic and craft competencies are creditable through works presented for evaluation. The amount of credit is established by mentor-experts or evaluation-tutors in terms of individual student goals.
11. Recreational competencies are creditable to the extent usual in institutions of higher education (i.e. usually limited to two months, or less, advanced standing), except when related to the student's Program of Study.